



Testimony of

Tom Kuroski, President

Newtown Federation of Teachers – Local 1727

S.B. 236 (Raised) An act extending the School Security Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program. (PS)

Good Morning Senator Larson and Representative Dargan and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is Tom Kuroski, I am presently serving in my sixth year as President of the Newtown Federation of Teachers, Local 1727 and I have been a science teacher in Newtown for the past 31 years. I am here today on behalf of the Newtown Public Schools, the American Federation of Teachers, Connecticut and all the school districts in the state to ask that you extend the time period to award a school district security grant from June 30, 2016, to June 30, 2017.

I would like to begin by saying thank you to Governor Malloy, members of the Public Safety and Security Committee and members of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission for helping to initiate this program in the months following what is considered by many, to be the single worst tragedy to happen in a school, in the history of our country.

The School Security Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program has been one of the most important legislative initiatives to ever come out of Hartford in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Tragedy. After learning about how the event unfolded, leaders in schools across the state and country began asking themselves could this happen in one of our schools? Do we have glass that a gunman could not shoot through to gain entrance into our schools? Do we have locks on doors to our classrooms that would allow teachers to lock their rooms without having to go out in the hall during a shooting event? Do we have two door entryway vestibules that would keep a gunman from just having to penetrate one set of doors before gaining entry to the school? The painful reality is, that the answer to these questions in most school systems in Connecticut and across the country was a frightening NO! Everyone suddenly felt extremely vulnerable!

As you know, many of these safety measures were never required when schools were constructed pre - 12/14/12, because at that time no one could have ever imagined, even in their worst nightmare, a tragedy occurring like the one that happened in Sandy Hook only three years ago. Unfortunately this has become our countries new reality. All new school construction projects must include safety and security protocols in the

architectural plans. Many of these protocols were mandated as a result of the work done by the Sandy Hook Advisory commission and were developed based on what was learned from the attack on the Sandy Hook School.

As schools around the state began to investigate the cost of upgrading the safety and security infrastructure in their existing schools they realized very quickly that the cost to make these upgrades was very high. So high in fact, that Superintendents and Boards of Education had to make difficult decisions when school budgets were developed as to how much money to spend on security initiatives and how much this cost would take away from other important educational and district needs.

School leaders should never have to be forced to make a decision as whether to spend money to make their schools safe or make their schools where all the diverse educational needs of their students are being funded. The School Security Infrastructure Competitive Grant Program takes much of this burden off the shoulders of the Superintendent and Board of Education. Unfortunately not all schools have benefited from this program and the many that have already received funding need much more to get there schools as safe as recommended by the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission.

Please let the 169 districts in Connecticut finish the important work they have started. Allow them to continue upgrading the safety and security of their schools without having to financially compromise the education of their students. You need to sustain and provide the necessary funding for this important program until all schools in the state can educate their students in a safe and secure environment.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Thomas Kuroski

Teacher – Newtown Public Schools (31 years)

President – Newtown Federation of Teachers – Local 1727

Co-Chair – Newtown District Safety and Security Committee

AFT-CT Executive Committee Vices President